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Translation and *Translatio*: ‘Nuestro latín’ in Alfonso el Sabio’s *General estoria*

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Translation and *Translatio*: ‘Nuestro latín’ in Alfonso el Sabio’s *General estoria*

Abstract: One of the more puzzling aspects of lexical gloss in the *General estoria* of Alfonso X is the use of the phrase *nuestro latín*, which is unique to the *General estoria* within the Alfonsine corpus. Since Antonio Solalinde’s study of it in 1936, the phrase has been taken to indicate a vague distinction between Latin and the vernacular. However the term *latín* has important historiographic implications apart from denoting the Latin language, and *nuestro latín* is one of several first person plural phrase unique to the *General estoria* that refers to language, exegesis or doctrine, such as *nuestro romanz*, *nuestro language*, *nuestros sabios* and *nós los christianos*. This paper examines the use of these first person plural phrases in lexical glosses as historiographic phenomon. *Nuestro latín* and other first person plural phrases in the *General estoria* separate Christian Castile from Muslim, Jewish and pagan others while casting Alfonso, his text and his readers as inheritors of imperial authority by establishing ownership of and affiliation with a Latin past.

Keywords: Alfonso X, Historiography, Translation, Exegesis, Vernacular, Empire

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The *General estora*, a six-part universal history commissioned by Alfonso X in the 1270s, has a complicated relationship with Latin, the language of the vast majority of its source texts.¹ Like other early vernacular translators, the compilers of the *General estoria* struggle to adapt the vocabulary and range of expression of Latin to Castilian, a vernacular language until that time unused to such purposes.² As a result, they not only define many of the terms taken from Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic, but also quote Latin source texts, which they translate and gloss. However, this process strikes a difficult ideological balance, since the purpose of the *General estoria* is to argue for a continuity of imperial authority from the rulers of the past to Alfonso, even though the very use of Castilian is a constant reminder of the rupture between antiquity and thirteenth-century Iberia.³ Many of the resulting glosses and comparisons with the past, including Alfonso's claim to be descended from both Jupiter and Nimrod, border on anachronism as the compilers insert their present into the texts of the past and struggle to make history understandable and relevant to a vernacular audience.⁴ Lexical gloss in the *General estoria* is part of a larger system of

¹ I would like to thank College of Arts and Sciences at Oklahoma State University for a Dean's Incentive Grant, which allowed me time to write. I am grateful to Professor Charles Fraker Jr. for introducing me to Alfonso and to Professors Perry Gethner and Isabel Alvarez Sancho for their help and advice with later drafts of this study. I am especially grateful for the thorough and thoughtful comments of the anonymous readers of this article.

² For information on academic commentary and translation, see Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Classical Text*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). and Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991). studies on text and gloss. For information specifically on the *General estoria*, see Fernando Lázaro Carreter, 'Sobre el "modus interpretandi" alfonsí,' *Ibérica* VI (1961): 97–115; Francisco Rico, *Alfonso el Sabio y la General estoria* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1984), 167–188; Diego Catalán, *La estoria de España de Alfonso X: creación y evolución*, Fuentes cronísticas de la historia de España 5 (Madrid: Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1992), 20–25.

³ David Rojinsky, *Companion to Empire: a Genealogy of the Written Word in Spain and New Spain, c.550-1550*, (New York: Rodopi, 2010).

⁴ All citations from the *General estoria* are from the recent edition by the team led by Sanchez-Prieto: Alfonso X, *General estoria*, ed. Pedro Sánchez-Prieto Borja, 5 vols., Biblioteca Castro (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2009). I have also consulted the transcriptions of the *General estoria* and other Alfonsine texts in Lloyd Kasten, John Nitti and Wilhelmina Jonxis-Henkemans, *The Electronic Texts and Concordances of the Prose Works of Alfonso X, El Sabio* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1997). Alfonso claims descent from Jupiter through Frederick I in the first part of the *General estoria* (*General estoria* vol. 1, 1 392). He claims direct descent from Nimrod in the

exegetical and historiographical authorization that places Alfonso at the end of a long line of rulers stretching from antiquity into the present. This linguistic tension can be seen in the use of the phrase *nuestro latín* and other first person plural phrases used throughout the *General estoria*.

Nuestro latín has been understood to indicate a special relationship to Latin in the *General estoria* since Antonio Solalinde examined the phrase in 1936, arguing that it indicates a vague distinction between Latin and the vernacular, and that the compilers inscribe themselves into the Latin tradition and consider it their own.⁵ He notes that the Alfonsine compilers place the adjective *latino* ‘a todo lo emanado de la civilización romana y de la cristiana’ and that they use the term in often ambiguous ways, sometimes referring to Castilian words that are similar to Latin and which they call Latin.⁶ Solalinde ended his study by speculating as to whether the phrase *nuestro latín* is unique to the *General estoria* and noting that the subject warranted further study. This article has since been cited as proof of Alfonso’s affinity with Latin, but the question of Latin and the first person plural has not yet been studied in depth. Niederlehe affirms that the compilers do not see Latin and Castilian as separate languages because of a shared manner of expressing reality in spite of having vastly different word forms.⁷ Moure agrees with him and maintains that the phrase indicates little or no distinction between Latin and the vernacular.⁸ Márquez Villanueva cited the phrase as evidence of affinity with Latin culture and claims that the compilers consider Latin and Castilian as a continuity and distinct from the Arabic on the Iberian Peninsula.⁹ Manuel Alvar, writing about the didacticism of the *General estoria*, views the term as a deliberate attempt to associate Castilian with Roman culture.¹⁰ Perona, agreeing with Alvar, maintains

fourth part (*General estoria* vol. 4, 2 505). See Rico for information on these sections: Rico, *Alfonso el Sabio y la General estoria*, 175.

⁵ Antonio G. Solalinde, “‘Nuestro latín’ en la *General estoria* de Alfonso el Sabio,” in *Homenatge a Antoni Rubió i Lluch: miscel·lània d’estudis literaris, històrics i lingüístics* ed. Antoni Rubió y Lluch (Barcelona, 1936), 133-140.

⁶ Solalinde ‘Nuestro latín,’ 139.

⁷ Hans-Josef Niederehe, *Alfonso X el Sabio y la lingüística de su tiempo*, (Alcobendas, Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería, 1987), 102.

⁸ José Luis Moure, ‘La política lingüística alfonsí y los límites de la estandarización,’ *Olivar: Revista de Literatura y Cultura Españolas* 1, no. 1 (2000), 161-170: 169.

⁹ Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *El concepto cultural alfonsí* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1994), 39.

¹⁰ Manuel Alvar, ‘Didacticismo e integración en la *General estoria* (estudio del Génesis),’ in *La lengua y la literatura en tiempos de Alfonso X*, ed. Fernando Carmona and Francisco J.

that the phrase is ‘al servicio de la continuación de Roma.’¹¹ Among linguists Alfonso’s use of *nuestro latín* is often cited in studies on the differentiation between Latin and romance languages that solidifies in the second half of the thirteenth century, as Wright and Tejedo-Herrero have shown.¹²

While *nuestro latín* has been taken as an indication of the Alfonsine compilers attitude to Latin, something similar to Castilian that should be emulated and appropriated, the use of the first person plural possessive, *nuestro*, has been ignored. This study examines the use of *nuestro latín* and other first person plural expressions in the *General estoria* as statements about language and, more importantly, history and doctrine. *Nuestro latín* and other first person plural phrases are part of a system of first-person plural use throughout the *General estoria*, the meaning of which is variable. It sometimes indicates a plural authorial or exegetic voice, sometimes a larger textual community that includes readers as well, and sometimes, contemporary Castile in general. The compilers refer to themselves as historians, readers and exegetes in the first person plural as they translate, explain and weave together their disparate sources. Moreover, the first person plural in the *General estoria* defines itself in opposition to others that are marked by the third person, *los* or *sus*, along the axes of language, doctrine and time. These phrases assert both ownership and affiliation as they negotiate the translation not only of the Latin source texts of the *General estoria*, but also *translatio imperii*, the transfer of imperial power from one people to another, thereby allowing Alfonso to claim his right over both past and present. *Nuestro latín* and other first

Flores (Murcia: Departamento de Literaturas Románicas, Facultad de Letras Universidad de Murcia, 1984), 25-78: 53–55.

¹¹ José Perona, ‘Lenguas, traducción y definición en el Scriptorium de Alfonso X,’ *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale* no. 14 (1989), 247-276: 264.

¹² Fernando Tejedo-Herrero, ‘Algunas reflexiones en torno al término latín en la documentación alfonsí,’ *Romance Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 4; Fernando Tejedo-Herrero, ‘Variacion e innovacion lexic: Las ‘Siete Partidas’ (1491)’ (The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2005); Roger Wright, ‘Bilingualism and Diglossia in Medieval Iberia (350-1350),’ in *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula*, eds. Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, Anxo Abuín González, and César Domínguez, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), 333–350; Roger Wright, ‘Complex Monolingualism in Early Romance,’ in *Linguistic Perspectives on the Romance Languages*, ed. William J Ashby, (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993), 377–388; Roger Wright, ‘Romance, Latín, y otra vez romance en la Península Ibérica en el siglo XII,’ in *Modelos latinos en la Castilla medieval*, ed. Mónica Castillo Lluch and Marta López Izquierdo, *Medievalia hispánica* 14 (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2010), 25–42.

person plural phrases in the *General estoria* align the text along doctrinal and historical lines by separating Christian Castile from Muslim, Jewish and pagan others while also placing Alfonso, his text and his readers at the end of a long chain of *translatio imperii* that begins with the Hebrews and ends with the Roman, or Latin, empire.

While *latín* primarily refers to the Latin language, it can also denote the Romans, their romance-speaking descendants or Latin Christians in general, and for this reason has important historiographic implications. As a universal history, the *General estoria* is structured by Augustine's six ages of history as well of the concept of *translatio imperii* between the four principal kingdoms, which was put forth by Orosius at the beginning of the fifth century.¹³ The Romans, or Latins, are the fourth and final kingdom in empire's westward journey from Babylon to Macedon, Carthage and finally Rome. The compilers mention this on several occasions in the *General estoria*, such as in the third part: 'onde dize sobre ello así cuál fue de comienço el regno de Babilonia, e empós ése el de Macedonia, e después d'estos dos el de África, e en cabo de todos estos tres en la fin el de los Romanos, que dura aun fasta oy (vol. 3,2 254).' The history of antiquity has a direct connection to the present in the Rome, the fourth and final empire, still holds power at the time of the *General estoria*. Alfonso's failed bid to become emperor of the Romans is often considered to be a motivation for the *General estoria*, a history that, had it not been abandoned with Alfonso's imperial claims, would have ended with his own rule, claiming affinity with Rome and Latin is a historiographic and not just linguistic maneuver.¹⁴

Nuestro and *nós* are also problematic words in the *General estoria*. *Nuestro latín* is only one of several first person plural expressions related to language, religion and commentary that are unique or nearly unique to the *General estoria*.¹⁵ For Latin, these include *nuestros latinos*, *latín nuestro*, *nuestros sabios latinos*, *nos los latinos* and *nos los*

¹³ Rico, *Alfonso el Sabio y la General estoria*, 15–36; Inés Fernández-Ordoñez, *Las estorias de Alfonso el Sabio* (Madrid: Istmo, 1992), 26–40; Georges Martin, 'El model historiográfico alfonsí y sus antecedentes,' in *La historia alfonsí: el modelo y sus destinos, siglos XIII-XV*, ed. Georges Martin, (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000), 9–40, 26.

¹⁴ For information on Alfonso's imperial bid, see H. Salvador Martínez, *Alfonso X, el Sabio, una biografía* (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2003), 205–233.

¹⁵ It occurs sixteen times in the *General estoria*: vol. 1,1 185, 227, 273, 300, 552; vol 1,2 337, 422 (twice), 434, 476, 702, 705, 706; vol. 4,1 140; vol. 4,2 191, 193.

latinos dezimos, which appear in lexical glosses and in explanations of sources and source treatment. With the exception of *latín nuestro*, which appears once in the *Estoria de Espanna*, all are unique to the *General estoria* within the Alfonsine texts published by the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies. These are often paired with first-person plural possessives for the vernacular: *nuestro romanz*, *nuestro language* and *nuestro language de Castiella*. *Nuestro romanz* is unique to the *General estoria* and *nuestro language* is far more common in it than in other texts produced by Alfonso.¹⁶ It appears 75 times in the Madison transcriptions of the *General estoria*, six in the *Estoria de Espanna* and five times in other texts. Religious doctrine is also dealt with in the first person plural. *Nos los xpristianos* occurs only once and only in the *General estoria* and *nos los xtristianos* occurs four times in the *General estoria* and nowhere else. *Nos los xpristianos* appears once in the *Estoria de Espanna*, when it is spoken by Pelayo before the Battle of Covadonga as he rallies his troops and rejects Bishop Oppa's plea to surrender.

The narrative voice of the *General estoria* is an editorial or exegetical first person plural, *nos*, that indicates not only the corporate nature of the text, but also a shared background and doctrine with its implied audience. The compilers employ first person plural verb forms to refer to their own actions such as telling, explaining or understanding, as they weave together and expound on their disparate source texts. This is seen most frequently as they pass from one narrative to another, or when they remind their audience of material they have already narrated or will narrate later, as they do when they bring up Cecrops, King of Athens, a second time in the first part of the *General estoria*: 'E a este rey Cicrops diz assí, como vos avemos ya dicho, quel llamavan Difres en el language de Egipto por la razón que vos contamos ya como oyestes, e en Atenas le llamavan Cicrops (vol. 1,2 89).' The narrative voice is plural and the implied audience is a second person plural. In contrast, the even more frequent attributions to sources are third person singular, such as when the compilers attribute information to Josephus: 'Dize otrossí Josefo en el seseno capítulo que tomaron e ovieron de morada de luego los fijos de Sem a Asia' (vol. 1,2 81) or Eusebius: 'E andados LVI años de

¹⁶ *Nuestro language* appears a total of 65 times in the *General estoria* and five times in *El libro de las leyes*. *Nuestro lenguaje* appears seven times in the *General estoria* and *nuestro romanz* appears once in the first part of the *General estoria*.

Abraam e quatro d'este rey Zaméis començóse es año el regno de la isla de Creta, e regnó 'y Cres, e fue el primero rey d'ella, e natural dend, segund dize Eusebio (vol. 1,2 203).'

This first person plural of the *General estoria* is not simply the majestic plural employed by Alfonso in other texts and documents, usually with the phrase 'nos, don Alfonso'.¹⁷ This formula does not occur in the *General estoria*, and, unlike other texts of the Alfonsine Scriptorium, which employ the first person plural or the third person singular in their prologues, the prologue of the *General estoria*, from ms. B.N. 816 from the second half of the thirteenth century, employs the first person singular:¹⁸

...yo don Alfonso, por la gracia de Dios rey de Castiella, de Toledo, de León, de Gallizia, de Sevilla, de Córdoba, de Murcia, de Jaén e del Algarbe, fijo del muy noble rey don fernando e de la muy noble reína doña Beatriz ...fiz ende fazer este libro. E mandé y poner todos los fechos señalados de las estorias de la Biblia como de las otras grandes cosas que acaecieron por el mundo desde que fue començado fasta'l nuestro tiempo.¹⁹ (vol. 1, 1 5–6)

This formal introduction to the history invokes both Alfonso's and the lands over which he holds dominion, in the first person singular, *yo*, which is employed with a pronoun and first person verb forms. His history continues until *nuestro tiempo*, an ambiguous first person plural that is distinct from the first person singular employed earlier in the sentence and that includes Alfonso and his compilers, as well as at times their readers. Apart from the poetry of the *Cantigas*, this is the only time Alfonso employs the first person plural, as Fernández-Ordoñez notes.²⁰ When Alfonso appears in the narrative of the *General estoria*, he is portrayed in the third person, as in the second part of the *General estoria*, which credits

¹⁷ Maria Teresa Herrera, María Nieves Sanchez, María Estela González de Fauve, María Purificación Zabía, eds., *Textos y concordancias electronicos de documentos castellanos de Alfonso X* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1999).

¹⁸ Biblioteca Nacional de España, *Inventario general de manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1953), vol. 2 417.

¹⁹ All italics are mine.

²⁰ Inés Fernández Ordoñez, 'El taller historiográfico alfonsí. La *Estoria de España* y la *General estoria* en el marco de las obras promovidas por Alfonso el Sabio' in *El scriptorium alfonsí: de los libros de astrología a las Cantigas de Santa María*, ed. Jesús Montoya Martínez, Ana Domínguez Rodríguez, and Inés Fernández-Ordóñez (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1999), 105-126, 106, note 4.

Alfonso with rebuilding the aqueduct of Segovia, a city founded by Hercules' son, Espan:²¹

E este Espán pobló después cerca de una sierra de Duero una cibdat en un lugar que yaze cerca de una cabeça d'esta sierra e dizen a aquella cabeça Govia e porque la asentó cerca d'ella llamáronla Segovia, e éste *fizo* y aquella puente que es y agora por do viniese el agua por ella a la villa, que se iba ya destruyendo, e el rey don Alfonso *fizola* refazer e adobar que viniese el agua por ella a la villa como solía. (vol. 2, 2 98)

Alfonso's past actions, like those of Hercules and Espan, are part of the history and physical reality of Segovia and are related in the third person singular of the preterit. Similarly, Alfonso uses the etymology for 'Centaur' (cien caballeros) to bring up his own creation of a body of 200 knights to defend his parents' tombs in Seville. Alfonso's actions are recounted with third person preterite verb forms:

a la manera que el muy noble e muy alto dezeno don Alfonso, rey de Castiella, de Toledo, de León e del Andaluzía, que *compuso* esta estoria, que en la muy noble cibdad de Sevilla, que a onra de Dios e de Santa María e del muy noble e muy santo rey don Fernando su padre, que *escogió* allí la su sepultura e *metió* allí el su cuerpo, que *estableció* dozientas cavallerías...(vol. 1,2 90)

Within the narrative of the *General estoria* Alfonso is one more historical figure and his actions are recounted in the third person singular.

It is in this context that the compilers employ the phrase *nuestro latín*, which with one exception, appears in relation to material dealing with the narrative of the Old Testament. It is most frequent in the first part of the *General estoria*, where it appears thirteen times; the other three instances are in the fourth part of the *General estoria*. On all but one occasion it serves to establish a relationship between Hebrew history and contemporary Christendom, and usually occurs in glosses, which the compilers attribute to Saint Jerome or Petrus Comestor, two Christian scholars noted for their knowledge of the Hebrew language and Jewish matters. Jerome translated the Vulgate and authored treatises on Hebrew place- and

²¹ Anthony J. Cárdenas, 'The Myth of Hercules in the Works of Alfonso X. Narration in the *Estoria de España* and in the *General estoria*,' *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 74, no. 1 (1997): 5–20.

proper names.²² Comestor, the twelfth century author of the *Historia Scholastica*, was known for his knowledge of the Old Testament and was thought to have consulted with rabbis for interpretations of certain Hebrew words and Bible passages.²³ The phrase *Nuestro latín* occurs with glosses of single words as well as full-sentence or longer quotes of Latin biblical material that are rendered first in Latin and then in Castilian.

The compilers frequently cite Jerome as the translator of the Bible, as co-author of the *Canones Chronici*, and as a glossator, although according to Eisenberg he is most frequently quoted via the *Glossa Ordinaria* and at other times from the *Historia Scholastica*.²⁴ He is mentioned six times with *nuestro latín*, which appears in relation to place names and in typological or historical cross-references to other biblical verses that in the *General estoria* are often cited in Latin and later translated into Castilian.²⁵ Latin and Castilian Christianity are united by the first person plural, *nos* and *nuestro*, differentiated from the Hebrew language, which is modified by the third person. This is the case in a section from Numbers (13.24-25), when the Israelite scouts come upon a spring with grapes, the brook of Eschol. In the vulgate the Hebrew name, *Neelescol*, is glossed as *Torrentem Botri* in Latin and the compilers gloss it both in Latin and Castilian. Both languages are modified with a first person plural possessive: ‘E llamáronle por esta razón los ebreos a aquel logar en su ebraigo Nehel Escol, que diz tanto en el *nuestro latín* como torrens botri, e en el *nuestro language de Castiella* torrient o arroyo de razimo (vol. 1, 2 705).’ Hebrew is marked with an article and a third person singular verb while both Latin and Castilian are referred to with a first person

²² Saint Jerome, *De Situ Et Nominibus Locorum Hebraicorum Liber*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patriologia Latina* (23: J. P. Migne Editorem, 1855).

²³ The consultation of living Jews by twelfth century Christian exegetes in France and elsewhere has been well documented by Beryl Smalley and, more recently Signer. Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970); Michael A. Signer, ‘Polemic and Exegesis: Varieties of Twelfth-Century Hebraism,’ in *Hebraica Veritas?: Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Schoulson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 21–32. Scholars such as Hugh, Andrew and Richard of Saint-Victor actively pursued information on Hebrew language and Jewish culture. For Comestor’s relationship with contemporary Jews, see: Aryeh Grabois, ‘The *Hebraica Veritas* and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century,’ *Speculum* 50, no. 4 (1975): 613–634.

²⁴ Daniel Eisenberg, ‘The *General estoria*: Sources and Source Treatment,’ *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 89, no. 1 (1973): 206–227, 213.

²⁵ Alfonso X, *GE*, vols. 1, 1 185, 273, 300, 705, 706; vol. 4, 2 191.

plural possessive, *nuestro*. Verse 7 of Psalm 109 is cited immediately after in Latin, which is then translated into Castilian:

E dixo d'ello en el psalmo, segund diz el traslado de Jerónimo en la Biblia por el *nuestro latín* en estas palabras: De torrente en via bibit propterea exaltavit caput, e diz esto en el *nuestro language de Castiella*: De la torrient bebió en la carrera, e por ende exaltó la cabeça (e éste fue Jesucristo). (vol. 1, 2 706)

Latin authorizes and serves as an intermediary between Hebrew and Castilian, indicating a clear lineage steeped in Christian orthodoxy and the Church Fathers. Both Latin and Castilian are described with a first person plural possessive even though the point of the Latin citation and its translation is to remind readers of the Latin authority of their source texts even as the compilers render them in the Castilian vernacular. The typological cross-reference further appropriates the Hebrew Bible by using a psalm to foreshadow Christ in a section of Exodus and a reference with Psalm 109, which is also read as a type of Christ and further reinforces the Christianization of the passage.

Jerome is cited in a similar way in an extra-biblical section on Abraham's youth in Chaldea. According to Midrash the young Abraham (at that time still Abram) smashed his father's idols while living in the city of Ur in Chaldea, where he began to preach monotheism. He is successful enough to come to the attention of the king, Nimrod, who, on the advice of his counselors and fearing the destruction of his kingdom, which had been predicted by astrologers, decides to have Abraham burned. An angel saves Abraham from the flames and Nimrod releases him. The story echoes the prophet Daniel's salvation with his companions in the oven of Nebakanezer in Daniel 3:15-3:30. Proof of the event comes from a Latin citation attributed to Jerome. The verse is a mix of several verses of the Old testament that refer to God's leading (*eduxit*) His people out of either Egypt or the fire of the Chaldeans:²⁶

²⁶ These include Genesis 11:31 '*eduxit* eos de Ur Chaldeorum,' Genesis 15:7: '*dixitque ad eum ego Dominus qui eduxi te de Ur Chaldeorum ut darem tibi terram istam et possideres eam,*' Exodus 20:2 '*ego sum Dominus Deus tuus qui eduxi te de terra Aegypti,*' Leviticus 25:42 '*mei enim servi sunt et ego eduxi eos de terra Aegypti non venient condicione servorum*' and Deuteronomy 5:6: '*ego Dominus Deus tuus qui eduxi te de terra Aegypti de domo servitutis.*' Alberto and Laurentio Turrado Colunga, *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1994).

E cuenta Jerónimo en la glosa que por ende retraen e dizen los hebreos, e aun que se precian por ello, que fue dicha a Abraham esta palabra que dize assí en el *nuestro latín*: Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus, que eduxite de Ur Caldeorum. E quiere esto dezir assí en el *nuestro language*: yo só el tu Señor Dios que te saqué del fuego o de la cibdat Ur de los caldeos. (vol. 1, 1 183)

Like the previous passage, this section reproduces an authoritative Latin source text and translates it into Castilian. Both languages are described with the first person plural. It is the oral source used Saint Jerome, presumably Jews with whom he spoke, that are described in the third person. Even though the exegesis of this passage draws on Midrash, the Jewish oral tradition in this text serves to reinforce an orthodox Christian reading of Scripture.

A similar dynamic occurs with Petrus Comestor, the twelfth-century chancellor of the University of Paris and author of the *Historia Scholastica*, who is mentioned eight times in relation to the phrase *nuestro latín*.²⁷ As with Jerome, Comestor is cited along with *nuestro latín* in matters regarding Hebrew, and particularly Jewish religious practices laid out in Leviticus. Comestor is attributed as a source of details of the sacrifices described in Leviticus:

E Cuenta maestre Pedro, e assi es, que esta lumbrera era en la tienda ó el candelero que vos dixiemos que fuera puesto en la camara de los sacrificios despues de la entrada de la tienda, e de noche ardién y VII lámpadas, e de día quatro non más, e que eran las mechas de yuncos. E cuenta que aquellos estrumentos en que estavan las mechas en las lampadas eran de oro, e avién nombre en el *nuestro latin* cincenllelas, e dizienles mergos otrossí, e cincendelas e mergas quiere dezir en el *nuestro ramanz de Castiella* tanto como somurguiones...(vol. 1, 2 337)

Comestor engages in cultural Hebraism to explain the technical features of the tabernacle. The Alfonsine compilers attribute the gloss to Comestor, address their implied plural audience in the second person plural and claim ownership of and affiliation with both Latin and Castilian, which they indicate with a first person plural possessive.

This distinction between a Jewish other and a Latin Christian ‘we’ is often temporal

²⁷ Alfonso X, *General estoria*, vols. 1,1 273, 337, 422 (twice), 434, 476; vol. 4,2 191, 193.

as well as linguistic, as is the case in book XVII of the first part of the *General estoria* when the compilers employ the term and draw on the authority of Comestor when defining the difference between a sacrifice (*sacrificio*) and an offering (*offrenda*), which has origins among both Hebrews and gentiles. While Jews and gentiles draw a distinction between dry sacrifices (*libamen or gostameinto*) and sacrifices of wet (*humoroso*) things, *offrenda* or oblations, Christians do not:

E éstos son los nombres señalados que nós fallamos escritos que los *nuestros sabios* dixieron en el *nuestro latín* a los sacrificios de la vieja ley, segund que los judíos fazién sos departimientos entre sacrificio e sacrificio, e otrossí los gentiles dónd nós venimos, en los suyos. Mas però veemos agora que la santa escritura non faze fuerça en los nombres, e esto assí lo otorga maestre Pedro, ca diz que por cada cosa que omne ofrece a Dios *dezimos agora* sacrificio, e tenemos que es razón e cumple assaz...(vol 1, 2 434)

Contemporary Latin Christendom is defined against Jewish and pagan pasts in a technical gloss. Hebrew here is not just a different language, but also a language of antiquity given that it is described in the third person and the imperfect, *fazién*. Latin pagans, *los gentiles*, are also kept at a distance by the third person plural possessive, *los suyos*. The compilers align themselves exegetically with Latin, *nuestros sabios* who comment the Bible in Latin, *nuestro latín* and who themselves come after the gentiles, but who no longer are such. This is further reinforced by the use of the first person plural for both Latin, indicating Christian exegesis, and Christian authorities, *los nuestros sabios*.

Indeed, *nuestro latín* is bound to the exegetical authority of Petrus Comestor and Saint Jerome over the Hebrew Bible, and the first person plural in the *General estoria* often refers to exegetical authorities. The phrase *nuestros sabios*, a reference to Christian exegetes, authorizes the compilers' Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. This term, along with *nuestros latinos*, which also refers to exegetical authorities, is also unique to the *General estoria* within the Alfonsine corpus. Both phrases situate the compilers and their audience within an authoritative tradition that shapes interpretation of the source texts and hence the historical narrative. *Nuestros latinos* occurs seven times in the first part of the *General*

estoria and is used primarily for biblical material, particularly to contrast Christian and non-Christian sources, such as the Arabic sources the compilers include for the life of Abraham and for the history of Egypt.²⁸ The phrase appears twice in material on the life of Abraham:

Mas porque toda la estoria de Abraham e de sos hermanos e aun de Tare su padre se tiene d'aquí adelante en las razones de Abraham, e diremos de Abraham lo que fallamos dicho de *los nuestros latinos esponedores* d'aquellos palabras de Moisés e de razones de arávigos que leemos que pertenecen a esta estoria, e diziendo de Abraham diremos de su padre e de sos hermanos, e contaremos luego de su nacimiento. (vol 1, 1 159)

The compilers lay bare their process of research, interpretation and exposition with their verbs in this passage, employing first person plural verbs for reading, *leemos*, *fallamos dicho*, which precede verbs for oral exposition, *diremos* and *contaremos*. They draw on two groups of sources: Arabs, *los arávigos* and Latin Christian exegetes, *nuestros latinos esponedores*. The compilers employ Arabic sources, but align themselves with the Latin, which they indicate with a first person plural possessive, even if they do at times favor Arabic sources over Latin: 'Sobre el nacimiento de Abraham fallamos dos dubdas, la una del tiempo en que nació, la otra del lugar. La del tiempo, segund *nuestros latinos*, como oiredes, la del lugar, segund los arávigos, assí como vos contaremos (vol 1, 1 159).' While the compilers are willing to draw on non-Christian sources for information in their sources, they are clear on their own Christian affiliation.

In addition to *nuestros latinos*, *nuestros sabios* also refers to Christian commentators, either of the Old Testament or pagan authors, particularly Ovid. It appears six times in the first part of the *General estoria*, where the term generally refers to Christian commentators on the Old Testament, particularly when they come into conflict with Arabic sources, such as the *Estoria de Egipto*.²⁹ Of the fifteen times it appears in the second part, on all but one it refers to Christian commentators of Ovid.³⁰ Ovid is the object of Christianization, for which

²⁸ Alfonso X, *General estoria*, vol 1,1 159 (twice), 481, 529; vol 1,2 150, 422, 859.

²⁹ Alfonso X, *General estoria*, vols. 1,1 161; vol. 1,2 154, 229, 384, 434 816 (twice).

³⁰ Alfonso X, *General estoria*, vols. 2,1 72, 111, 205, 205–206, 226, 238, 367, 386, 388, 388, 393, 394, 403, 404, 407.

the compilers also employ the first person plural with the phrase *nuestros sabios*, used to indicate the Christian commentators of Ovid, cited at the end of each transformation in order to bring the text in line with Christian doctrine.³¹ The compilers explain their method with the story of Actaeon, which they consider to be pertinent because it recounts the story of a noble and is of exemplary nature, in this case negative even though Actaeon's transformation into a stag cannot be taken literally:

E son estas razones todas de reyes e de fijos e nietos de reyes, e fablan de costumbres, e de emendar las malas e las dañosas e tornarlas en buenas; e por ende nós por non dexar en la estoria las otras muchas e buenas razones que vienen ý e son estorias, e non las perder por los mudamientos que los autores aduzen ý, que semejan cuemo fabliellas pero que lo non sean, contar vos emos las razones todas cuemo las contaron los gentiles e las dexaron en sos libros e segund que las retraen *los nuestros sabios* que contecieron, e desí departir vos emos d'aquellos mudamientos en qué guisa fueron e qué quieren dar a entender, e los pros e los enseñamientos que ý vienen, assí como lo departen *los nuestros sabios* otrossí. (vol 2, 1 205–206)

The narratives of the *Metamorphoses* are not mere fables (*fabliella*) meant only to entertain and of little moral or historical substance. Rather, they are important because they are stories of kings and sons of kings, and provide examples of praise-worthy and blame-worthy conduct. They have historical value in spite of the fantastic changes and pagan gods that are included in the narrative. To understand the hidden meaning of pagan poetry, the compilers include explanations of the fables by Christian scholars, whom they describe with the term *nuestros sabios*, which distinguishes them from pagan authors. Their exegesis serves to strip away the fantastic and pagan elements from the *Metamorphoses* and make them suitable for serious historical reading by Christian nobles. This phrase is the standard formula to introduce allegoresis of Ovidian fables at the end of each metamorphosis: 'Agora departir uos

³¹ The compilers cite 'maestro Johan' or 'el fraile' as a source of their Ovidian commentaries although they often employ glosses of Arnulfo d'Orleans and others. See Irene Salvo García, 'La materia ovidiana en la *General estoria* de Alfonso X: Problemas metodológicos en el estudio de su recepción,' in *Estudios sobre la Edad Media, el Renacimiento y la temprana modernidad*, ed. Jimena Gamba Corradina and Francisco Bautista Pérez (San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua. Centro Internacional de Investigación de la Lengua Española, 2010), 359–369.

emos segunt que lo departen *los nuestros sabios* que dan a entender estos mudamientos del Rey Tereo e de la reína Promne e d'aquella infante Filomena (vol 2, 1 367).’ They do this also for Atlas and Perseus: ‘Agora queremos dezir lo que departieron *los nuestros sabios* sobr’estos mudamientos e estas razones estrañas que los gentiles aquí dizen e a qué semejança fueron dichas (vol 2, 1 396).’ The compilers employ a similar formula for the story of Actaeon and distinguish between pagan and Christian exegetes: ‘De lo que *los sabios gentiles e los nuestros santos* padres dan a entender del fecho del infant Acteón (vol 2, 1 210).’ These phrases both appropriate Ovid by giving the *Metamorphoses* an acceptable Christian meaning and also distance pagan Ovid and the un-interpreted *Metamorphoses*.

These exegetic maneuvers reconcile doctrinal problems with the *Metamorphoses* and recast its narratives as exemplary. However, they merely explain the experiences of individuals recounted in Ovid’s text through allegory or euhemerism but do not overcome the gulf between pagan antiquity, *los gentiles*, and vernacular Romance Christian culture. This requires more radical narrative and interpretative strategies, as is the case with the *Fasti*, which is cited in the second part of the *General estoria*. The compilers define, contextualize, and appropriate it through a series of first-person plural adjectives and verbs. The Latin terms *fastus* and *nefastus* are glossed in Castilian, which is modified with a first person plural. The compilers carry their exposition further by comparing Ovid and his text with Christian martyrologies:

Onde este otro nombre fastos en el latín tanto quiere dezir en el language de Castiella como convenibles o otorgados, porque eran dados e otorgados por convenibles de labrar los ombres sos mesteres e oír sos pleitos e librarlos. E d’este ordenamiento que Ovidio fabló en aquel Libro de los días fastos e nefastos fallamos que tomaron los *nuestros santos padres* de la Ley de Cristo e los otros *nuestros sabios* con ellos ell ordenamiento del libro a que en la *nuestra iglesia* de Cristo llamamos Martirojo, ó sñen otrossí a la semejança d’aquel libro cuáles son cada unos días en el mes e cómo an nombre e cuáles son santos e de curar e cuáles non. (vol 2, 1 226)

Like Ovid’s *Fasti*, the Christian martyrologies list festivals and religious obligations, but the Christian equivalent comes from Christ, first through the saints and then through wise men to

be contained within the church, all of which are modified with a first person plural possessive, except for the Latin of Ovid's text, which is referred to as 'el latín'. The compilers not only gloss the vocabulary of Ovid, but also find Christian equivalents, thus replacing the pagan festivals with their own Christian feasts, leaving the pagan past as a sort of a palimpsest under Christianity. This radical transformation of Ovid seeks to erase historical difference while also affirming Christian doctrine, which the compilers accomplish with a first person plural possessive to show doctrinal difference even as they affirm other similarities.

The Christianization of the *fasti* is a radical erasure of historical difference, but language, and particularly Latin, plays an important role in the transferal of Christian imperial authority to Castilian, and hence, Alfonso. The importance of gloss to the project of *translatio studii* comes into play in the prologue to Leviticus in the first part of the *General estoria*. As a historical book of the Bible, Leviticus was of great interest to the compilers and the subject of largely literal interpretation within the *General estoria*. And yet this book of law and sacrifices and other Jewish religious practices is perhaps one of the most problematic for establishing continuity between the past and present because of the differences between Jewish and Christian religious festivals. The compilers expand on the short introduction to Leviticus in the *Historia Scholastica*. Drawing on material in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Comestor begins his exposition with the name of the book, which comes from Greek and refers to the fact that it deals with the duties of the Levite priests: 'Tertia distinctio historiae, quam scripsit Moyses, Graece dicitur Leviticus, quia de electione et ministerio levitarum agit'.³² [The third book of history, which Moses wrote, in Greek is called Leviticus, because it is about the selection and ministry of the Levites.]³³ Comestor glosses the title as *Offertorius* or *Sacrificaticius* in Latin and notes the Hebrew title comes from the first words of the book itself, just like certain masses, which are named from their introit:

Hebraice vero Vaiacra, quod sonat ministeriales. Vocavit autem Moyses more
Hebraeorum, quia principii librorum nominant eos, sicut *nos* officia missarum, et

³² Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica, Patrologia Latina* vol. 198, 1193C.

³³ My translation of the *Historia Scholastica* here and elsewhere.

Evangelia, videlicet cum *dicimus* Dominica qua cantatur: Populus Sion; vel legitur: Erunt signa in sole, et luna. (1193C)

[Viacra in Hebrew to be sure, because it talks about ministerial things. And the Lord called onto Moses in the manner of the Hebrews, because they called them by the beginning of the books, just as we call the office of the mass and the Gospel, clearly since we say *Dominica* by which it is sung: People of Sion, or it is read: There will be signs in the sun and the moon.]

This use of the words from the first line of the books as titles is brought home with examples from the mass and the New Testament, both of which come from the Advent liturgy, indicating the coming of Christ and His redemption of the peoples of the world, particularly the gentiles. Comestor's text expounds on the letter of the text of the Bible by clarifying one of the more important aspects of the work, its title, in this case in three languages, each with its own textual and exegetical traditions. It also reminds its readers of doctrine by using examples of synecdochic naming by drawing on the names of the masses of Advent.

The *General estoria* expands on Comestor's exposition and creates a double path of transmission in two long paragraphs at the beginning of the book. By alternating between the first and third person, the compilers establish a line of transmission first from pagan Latins, *los gentiles*, then Christian Latins, *nuestros latinos*, and then to themselves and their own language, *nuestro lenguaje de Castiella*. The exposition starts with an exposition on the various names of Leviticus, beginning with the Hebrew name, *vagrica* (Vayikra), which is derived from its first words. This mention of the introit of masses leads to a discussion of the names of the days of the week, which are named similarly:

...los judíos cuando fazién libros de nuevo, de poner los nombres de las primeras palabras e de la primera razón en que los comiençan, como pone exiemplo que fizieron los gentiles en nombres delos días, e diz que lo *tenemos nós* aún agora, segund ell uso de la eglesia...(vol 1, 2 421)

Like the Jews, the gentiles also employ synecdochic naming, in this case for the days of the week, which are called according to the planet of the first hour. This practice is still in use in the time of the compilers, which is indicated by the first person plural, *tenemos*. It begins in

the third person and in the past, *los judíos* and *los gentiles*, and ends in the third person, *nós*, and the present, *agora*. By using the days of the week as an example of synecdochic naming, the compilers explain the Hebrew name of the third book of the Bible with an example familiar to any Castilian speaker. More importantly, they place their own language and culture, and their own present, within history. The names of the days of the week are a direct connection with the Roman past. However, these pagan names do not extend to Saturday or Sunday:

Mas *nós los christianos latinos* llamamos sábadó al día de Saturno por onra e remembrancha de la vieja ley e de los santos padres d'ella, dond tomamos *nós* esta estoria ... Al día de la planeta del sol, que es el primero día de la sedmana, *nós los cristianos latinos* otrossí por onra e remembrancha de Nuestro Señor Dios Jesucristo ... en *el nuestro latín* dizen dominus por señor, e d' éste latín dominus tomaron *los nuestros latinos* estos nombres dominicus e dominico e diéronle a auel día e llamaronle en *el nuestro language de Castiella* día de domingo, e esto es tanto como día señoral. (vol 1, 2 421–422)

In addition to clarifying why Saturday and Sunday do not follow the pattern of the rest of the days of the week, the compilers align themselves doctrinally. While there is continuity with pagan tradition for Monday through Friday, Saturday, *sábadó*, is named not for Saturn, but for the sabbath, an acknowledgement of Jewish tradition and the Old Testament on the part of the Fathers of the Church, *los santos padres*. Similarly, Sunday, *dominicus* or *domingo*, is named for God rather than the sun among Latin Christians, who are referred to with several first person plural phrases, *nós los christianos* and *nuestro latín*. This usage is brought all the way into the present with the word *domingo*, as it is called in Castilian, or *nuestro lenguaje de Castiella*. The example traces the development of the names of the days of the week both from the Latin classical past to a vernacular present, as well as from non-Christian to Christian present. Both Latin Christendom and the vernacular present are appropriated by the compilers and contrasted with non-Christian others.

While the Castilian of the *General estoria* is a new literary language unused to the range of expression found in its Latin source texts, the compilers have no trouble

differentiating between it and Latin or other languages, as is evident in the large number of full sentence and longer Latin citations and also lexical glosses. *Nuestro latín* does not indicate any linguistic confusion on the part of the compilers. Rather, it, plus the other first-person plural phrases that are unique to the *General estoria*, place Alfonso and his readers at the end of a long chain of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii* that begins with the Jews and ends with the Caesars in the common era, which is calculated from the incarnation of Christ and marks the sixth and final historical era according to Augustine. Castilian, and by extension Alfonso himself, are included in this through the first person plural phrases for the Castilian vernacular, such as *nuestro lenguaje de Castiella*. The first person plural aligns the compilers and their audience linguistically, doctrinally and historically with Latin Christendom.

And yet, while the purpose of the first person plural in general is to unite those included in its *nós*, it also separates them from those who are not included. This is particularly important to Alfonso, who found himself sovereign of territories that only a generation earlier had been in the hands of Muslim rulers and where Arabic was the language of literature and religion. Indeed, the use of the vernacular in his and his father's reign was to some degree brought about out of the practical need to communicate with a newly conquered population. The first person plural phrases of the *General estora* exclude Jews, Arabs and pre-Christian Gentiles, who are referred to in the third person, separate from the *nuestro* of the Latins and Castilians. While the compilers are interested in the minutiae of Jewish law and are willing to use Arabic sources for the life of Abraham, they make clear on which side of doctrine they stand. Similarly, the fantastic tales of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are suitable for history only through the lens of Christian commentators, who consider the supernatural events to be allegories or the result of magic and view the Greco-Roman gods as illustrious humans who were deified after death for their outstanding achievements. *Nuestro latín* and the other first person plural phrases that accompany it create a Castilian present and linguistic reality that derives its imperial authority from Rome, even as it separates itself as Christian against both a pagan and Hebrew past and a Jewish and Arabic present.